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Rep Solarz
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USIA FOR NEA, P/PFN, P/M, VOA/BRN, P/G
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E.O. 12356:N/A
 SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: REP. SOLARZ INTERVIEW ON SRI
 LANKA

1. INDEPENDENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY 'SUN' FEB. 4
 CARRIED A FRONT PAGE STORY OF AN INTERVIEW WITH
 CONGRESSMAN STEPHEN SOLARZ, FILED BY THE PAPER'S
 STRINGER IN WASHINGTON, AZIZ HANIFFA. TITLED "LANKA'S
 SOVEREIGNTY NOT COMPROMISED -- SOLARZ", ARTICLE REPORTED
 SOLARZ'S STRONG SUPPORT OF THE INDO-LANKAN ACCORD AND
 HIS BELIEF THAT WITHDRAWAL OF THE INDIAN PEACE-KEEPING
 FORCE (IPKF) "WILL BE A MATTER THAT WILL HAVE TO BE
 DETERMINED BOTH BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA AND THE
 GOVERNMENT OF INDIA." ARTICLE ALSO SAID "SOLARZ
 PROMISED THAT HE WOULD HOLD HEARINGS ON SRI LANKA
 SHORTLY." FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

2. (BEGIN TEXT)

-- REPRESENTATIVE STEPHEN J. SOLARZ, A LEADING U.S.
 CONGRESSMAN, WHO RECOMMENDED PRESIDENT J.R. JAYEWARDENE
 AND PREMIER RAJIV GANDHI FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE, SAID
 HE DOES NOT AGREE WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT INDIAN HEGEMONY
 HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED OVER SRI LANKA AND THE COUNTRY'S
 SOVEREIGNTY COMPROMISED, AS HAD BEEN VOICED BY SOME
 LANKAN CABINET OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION.

-- MR. SOLARZ, WHO CHAIRS THE U.S. HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE
 ON ASIA AND PACIFIC, WHICH HAS JURISDICTION OVER INDIA
 AND SRI LANKA, IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH "SUN" SAID
 THE IPKF "IS CLEARLY THERE (IN SRI LANKA) AT THE
 INVITATION AND WITH THE CONSENT OF THE DULY ELECTED
 GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA."

-- HE SAID: "I DON'T BELIEVE THE INDIAN PEACE KEEPING
 FORCE THERE IS AN ARMY OF OCCUPATION."

-- "MY ASSUMPTION IS THAT, AT ANY POINT IN THE FUTURE IF
 THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA ASKS IT TO LEAVE, IT WILL DO
 SO."

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-- IN FACT, HE REITERATED THAT HE STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT GANDHI WOULDN'T NEED MUCH PERSUASION IF THEIR PRESENCE THERE WAS NOT NEEDED. "I AM SURE HE WILL BE QUITE PLEASED TO BRING THE FORCE HOME."

-- HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED, THAT ULTIMATELY, WHETHER OR NOT THIS FORCE REMAINS WILL BE A MATTER THAT WILL HAVE TO BE DETERMINED BOTH BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

-- SOLARZ PROMISED THAT HE WOULD HOLD HEARINGS ON SRI LANKA SHORTLY. "WE DO HAVE A CONTINUING INTEREST IN THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA AND A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE WE LAST CONSIDERED WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON THERE," HE SAID.

-- HOWEVER, THE CONGRESSMAN WHO IS A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF INDIA AND HAS CONSISTENTLY CAMPAIGNED FOR BETTER INDO-U.S. RELATIONS, MAINTAINED THAT "I AM SURE THAT IF SRI LANKA WANTS THE IPKF TO LEAVE IT WILL LEAVE AND I AM ALSO SURE THAT IF INDIA COMES TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IT NO LONGER SERVES ITS INTERESTS TO HAVE THE FORCE THERE, IT WILL ALSO LEAVE."

-- AT THE SAME TIME, HE NOTED "MY IMPRESSION IS THAT PRIME MINISTER GANDHI FELT THAT IN AS MUCH AS A POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA WAS VERY MUCH IN THE INTEREST OF INDIA, THIS WAS THE ONE AND ONLY WAY OF BRINGING IT ABOUT AND I COMMEND HIM FOR HIS COURAGE AND FOR HIS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE RISKS INVOLVED."

-- HOWEVER, SOLARZ ACKNOWLEDGED THAT "AT THE END OF THE DAY, IF THE EFFORT DOES NOT SUCCEED, THE BITTERNESS, THE RESENTMENT, THE INTRANSIGENCE, THE EXTREMISM OF THE VARIOUS FORCES AND FACTIONS INVOLVED IN SRI LANKA CONFLICT MAY MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT."

-- HE SAID THAT IF THAT WAS THE CASE, "IT WOULD BE A GREAT TRAGEDY," AND ADDED THAT HE WOULD "NOT WANT TO SEE A COUNTRY LIKE SRI LANKA, WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND AT ONE TIME ONE OF THE MOST PEACEFUL AND UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 COLOMBO 01586

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: REP. SOLARZ INTERVIEW ON SRI

PLURALISTIC COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, BECOME A SOUTH ASIAN VERSION OF NORTHERN IRELAND WITH AN ENDEMIC ETHNIC CONFLICT WHICH MAKES LIFE A MISERY FOR ALL OF ITS PEOPLE."

-- HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE COUNTRY DETERIORATING TO SUCH A LEVEL, CAN BE AVOIDED.

-- "MAYBE IT CAN'T. BUT IF IT CAN, IT SURELY LIES ALONG THE PATH WHICH WAS BROKEN BY PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE WHEN THEY HAMMERED OUT THIS AGREEMENT," HE SAID.

-- ASKED TO COMMENT ON ALLEGED ATROCITIES BY THE IPKF, WHICH HAS ANGERED ALL COMMUNITIES IN SRI LANKA AND BEEN CONSTANTLY REFERRED TO BY SRI LANKAN PRIME MINISTER RANASINGHE PREMADASA, SOLARZ SAID, "CLEARLY, IF ATROCITIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE, I DEPLORE THEM AND I WOULD HOPE THAT THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN THEM WOULD BE HELD

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RESPONSIBLE."

-- HOWEVER, HE ADDED THAT THIS SHOULD APPLY, NOT ONLY TO THE INDIAN PEACE-KEEPING FORCE BUT ALSO TO THE GOVERNMENT FORCES IN SRI LANKA AS WELL AS THE TAMIL MILITANTS.

-- "IF THEY HAVE TAKEN PLACE, I HOPE WAYS CAN BE FOUND TO BRING THE GUILTY PARTY TO JUSTICE," HE SAID.

-- RECALLING HIS MEETING WITH THE LEADER OF THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE) VELUPILLAI PRABHAKARAN TWO YEARS AGO IN MADRAS, SOLARZ SAID THAT "I CERTAINLY HAD THE SENSE THAT HE WAS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO HIS CAUSE AND A WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE WAS NOT HIS MOST PROMINENT CHARACTERISTIC."

-- "BUT I CAN'T SAY THAT I WAS ABLE TO PREDICT THE ULTIMATE COURSE OF EVENTS," HE ADDED.

-- SOLARZ SAID THAT HE CAME AWAY FROM HIS MEETING WITH PRABHAKARAN AT THE TIME, FEELING THAT "IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE THE EFFORT TO SEARCH FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BECAUSE I DIDN'T SEE ANY OTHER ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM."

-- HE EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS "CLEAR THAT ANY POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF MAINTAINING THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF SRI LANKA AS A WHOLE WHILE GRANTING A MEASURABLE AUTONOMY TO THE TAMIL AREAS IN THE COUNTRY WITH SOME KIND OF LOOSE LINKAGE AT THE VERY LEAST BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN PROVINCES."

-- HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WASN'T "OVERLY OPTIMISTIC THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT COULD BE ACHIEVED, BUT I THOUGHT THERE WAS SUFFICIENT POSSIBILITY THAT (IT) WAS WORTH PURSUING."

-- HE SAID THAT HE SAW IN THE INDO-LANKA PEACE ACCORD OF JULY 29, ONE THAT "MAY TURN OUT TO BE ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR TIME."

(END TEXT)
ROSS

END OF MESSAGE

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